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The Grad Post Fall 2019, Program Spotlight, Master of Science in Biology

November 12, 2019





Our Master of Science degree is designed to provide cutting-edge training in biology that will prepare students for challenging professional careers or entry into competitive Ph.D. programs. Over 92% of our alumni are working in the biological, environmental, or health sciences; one out of every three graduates goes on to receive a terminal degree (e.g., Ph.D., M.D.). Our graduates work in 32 states and 10 countries.

Our masters program offers a number of unique advantages for students considering graduate training in biology:

- (1) The Department of Biology at Georgia Southern is a “full-service” department. The broad expertise of our faculty provides the opportunity to train in areas ranging from molecular biology to ecosystems. This diversity of expertise means that graduate students can work creatively across subdiscipline boundaries.
- (2) You will not get lost in the crowd. Our masters program comprises approximately 50 graduate students and 39 faculty. You can expect close interaction with peers and mentors. Graduate students in our program get a level of personal attention that is rare or nonexistent in larger graduate programs.
- (3) Georgia Southern’s location provides easy access to the amazing biodiversity of the southeastern United States. We are a 1-hour drive from coastal beaches and estuaries. Major rivers and bottomland forests are minutes from campus. The southern Appalachians are only 3 hours away.
- (4) For research opportunities based regionally, nationally, and internationally, students in our program are able to take advantage of our department’s many affiliations. In the recent past our graduate students have worked closely with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Army (Fort Stewart), Skidaway Institute of Oceanography, Sapelo Island Estuarine Research Reserve, National Park Service, Gray’s Reef National Marine Sanctuary, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association, The Nature Conservancy, and many more agencies abroad.

If this sounds like a graduate experience that you want to be a part of, then explore our [webpage](#) in more detail. We are also happy to hear from you or arrange a visit.

Sincerely,

Dr. Checo Colon-Gaud, Graduate Program Director

The Grad Post Fall 2019, Graduate Spotlight, Cynthia Groover

November 12, 2019

**Recent Graduate, Ed.D., Educational Leadership,
Higher Education Administration**

What drew you to Georgia Southern for your graduate studies?

As an employee, there simply was no good excuse to not take advantage of the Tuition Assistance Program and pursue the Ed.D. as the ultimate in professional development. I knew I had an idea for a research project that could improve the way our office, the Office was Institutional Effectiveness (OIE), was supporting the University, so it just made sense to take the plunge.

**What are your Georgia Southern “points of pride?”
What is one thing you are most proud of during your time here at Georgia Southern?**

I absolutely love working with professionals across campus and helping them look critically at how they’re doing what they’re doing for our students and helping them tell their stories of how they’re making Georgia Southern a better place for students to excel. There is so much good work happening throughout campus, and I think it’s great when we can show where specific places on campus took something they were doing, noticed it wasn’t working as well as they’d hoped or planned, and then put something in place to make a real improvement. It’s great when everything goes as planned, but we can also make progress when we hit those little speed bumps as well.

Tell us about your research?

I literally took the work I do every day here in OIE and turned it into my research. At the time I began the dissertation process, OIE had been supporting a fairly static set of resources for administrative and student affairs assessment on campus for about 5 years, but we didn’t really have much data that showed us that those resources were, in fact, helping anyone effectively engage in assessment. My research helped provide data my office can use to improve the way it fulfills one of its major responsibilities – ensuring effective assessment practices are ongoing, throughout the institution.

Tell us about what you do at Georgia Southern.



My new, official title is “Assessment and Accreditation Specialist,” in the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. I get to work with administrative and student affairs units across campus, helping them develop their assessment practices and processes to be sure we, as an institution, are providing the best environment and services possible for our students to be successful, both in and outside the classroom. I’m also directly involved with a lot of our activity relating to our regional accreditor, SACSCOC, so things related to our recent consolidation prospectus and report and our reaffirmation of accreditation reports, for example, frequently come across my desk.

I can’t say enough good things about the faculty in the Ed.D. program. I had an amazing committee in Drs. Juliann McBrayer (my chair), Richard Cleveland, and Amy Jo Riggs. The dissertation process was definitely not easy, but they believed in my study from day one, even when I was having some serious doubts. Collaborating with them to arrive at the final dissertation has definitely been a highlight of my time here at Georgia Southern.

Posted in [Uncategorized](#)

[The Grad Post Fall 2019, Student Spotlight, Ashley Thornton](#)

November 12, 2019



Master of Public Administration

What drew you to Georgia Southern for your graduate studies?

I came to Georgia Southern for my undergrad...and just never left! I began working here as a student employee in Eagle Dining Services’ Catering Department and worked my way up to a full-time position after graduation. After a couple years, I was able to change jobs within the University and have now been the Administrative Specialist in the Office of the President for the past three years. The University offers a wonderful Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) which provides a great

deal of help for employees pursuing additional education. Without this help, I never would have been able to

attend graduate school. I am so thankful to Georgia Southern for that opportunity and for the support I've received from my office. I cannot wait to be a Double Eagle next Spring!

What are your Georgia Southern "points of pride?" What is one thing you are most proud of during your time here at Georgia Southern?

One of my biggest points of pride is the connections I've made and continue to make here. Since my own educational path was pretty twisty and non-traditional, I'm able to help guide other students and provide advice from a very unique perspective. It is very rare that I walk around campus and don't see someone that I know, either through work or classes. That's such a welcoming feeling that has made this place feel like "home" for many years now. I love being part of this community and doing my part (however small it may be) to make others feel that way.

Are you a part of an internship or co-op experience? What are you doing? What are you learning?

As a full-time employee in the public sector, I am considered an "in-service" student in my program, so my every day job resembles an unofficial co-op of sorts. Every single class that I have taken thus far in my program has given me tools and knowledge that I can use in my current career. Being both an employee and a student makes for a truly interesting and productive learning environment (even though it can be very tiring!). I have already experienced many of the things we learn about in class, but my classes go beyond and build upon those experiences. They are teaching me the actual theory and best practices that contribute to the larger picture of how public organizations work as a whole.

How is Georgia Southern preparing you for your future career?

My English undergraduate degree already laid a strong foundation by developing and honing my critical thinking, analytical, and communication skills. These skills will never become obsolete no matter what direction the workforce takes in the future. My graduate program is expanding even more upon that. The M.P.A. program focuses on how to be an effective and efficient manager in the public sector, but this degree also stretches beyond just a job at a public organization. It is all about learning how to be an effective leader in general, how to manage people and resources according to their best interests and assets, and how to build better relationships and better organizations no matter where that might lead you. I'm gaining another invaluable skillset that will guide me in my current job as well as any other career that I decide to pursue in the future.

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The Grad Post Fall 2019, Student Spotlight, Abigail Hey

November 12, 2019



Master of Arts, English

What drew you to Georgia Southern for your graduate studies?

Before coming to Georgia Southern, I completed an Associate's degree in North Carolina. I then received a scholarship that waived my out-of-state tuition and allowed me to complete my undergraduate degree at Georgia Southern. Although after transferring I had only two years of undergraduate work left, I quickly developed professional relationships with several professors in the Department of Literature and other faculty members. These professors guided my research interests and always encouraged me to take on leadership roles. They helped me take advantage of some incredible opportunities like travelling to different cities for research, presenting at conferences, studying abroad in Ireland for two summer semesters, and much more. While studying abroad, I became invested in Irish history, culture, and the transnational connections between Ireland and the United States. Additionally, as I completed my undergraduate studies, I learned that I really enjoy counseling and teaching others. I was therefore drawn to Georgia

Southern because I felt confident that I could continue helping students and pursuing my research interests with support from faculty.

What are your Georgia Southern "points of pride?" What is one thing you are most proud of during your time here at Georgia Southern.

Within my time at Georgia Southern, I am most proud of helping other students acclimate and succeed academically. I have had the opportunity to work with transfer students, international students, new English majors, and first-year students. For example, I served as the Chair of Campus Outreach for Phi Theta Kappa and Tau Sigma, which are honor societies for transfer students. In this role, I helped foster a community for those who transferred from other universities, and I supported many individuals who were attempting to adjust to the new environment and find their place at Georgia Southern. I also worked as a Writing Fellow for the Department of Literature, assisting new majors with the writing and revision processes. Furthermore, I completed an internship in which I helped teach a class of 10th grade students from China who visited the university. Most recently, I worked as the Instructional Design and Faculty Support Graduate Assistant for the First-Year Experience department. In this position, I have assisted FYE 1220 instructors, designed curriculum, and taught two classes for first-year students. Overall, I have thoroughly enjoyed each opportunity to help others at Georgia Southern grow more capable and confident.

Are you a part of any research or work projects? If so, what are you doing?

For my Master's thesis, I am researching atypical responses to trauma and loss in 20th century literature. Coping with loss is understood as an often painfully distressing or sad experience, as individuals work through grief and try to come to terms with an absence, fill an emotional void, and move toward resolution. Elegies, or poems that express mortal loss and consolation, traditionally have similar aims. Yet not all mourners have positive feelings toward the dead or are able to resolve their grief. Some experiences are not as resolved and adaptive, and an author's work may reflect an untypical, acerbic, complicated response that extends beyond "the five stages of loss." I am researching authors like Sylvia Plath, Elizabeth Bishop, and Samuel Beckett to explore the complicated responses to loss within prose and poetry of the 20th century, a period in which traditional consolations and comforts are called into question.

How is Georgia Southern preparing you for your future career?

Studying literature has prepared me to think critically about real-world issues, examine and interpret texts, and communicate effectively, which are skills that have definitely prepared me for future employment in higher education. In the professional positions I have held at the university, I have also gained experience leading, tutoring, and teaching other students. Specifically, in my graduate and teaching assistantships, I have learned how to navigate issues within higher education and work with other faculty to design a program that impacts a large population of students. Both academically and professionally, Georgia Southern has helped me acquire the skills, knowledge, and experience necessary to succeed after I graduate.

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The Grad Post Fall 2019, Double Eagle Spotlight, Kathleen “Kitty” Crawford, Ed.D.

November 12, 2019



Double Eagle

Where are you from?

Originally from Columbia, Maryland, I moved to Jacksonville, Florida during my middle and high school years. After high school, I moved to Statesboro to complete my Bachelor of Science and Master's degrees. From there, I returned to Jacksonville to teach at an elementary school for five years then served as a Literacy Coach for two years. In 2005, I applied to become a Clinical Instructor of Elementary Education at Georgia Southern. Back to the 'Boro we moved, and I haven't looked back since!

What brought you to Southern for your first degree?

I knew I wanted to become an elementary teacher, so my high school counselor recommended Georgia Southern to me. My parents brought me to campus for a tour, and it instantly felt like home. The campus was beautiful, the student population was still small at the time, and, of course, the appeal of the original Teacher's College

helped to guide my decision to choose Southern for my first degree. I was also allured to this quaint, little town of Statesboro because, geographically, Georgia Southern was close enough to home in Jacksonville, yet, far enough away to let me soar on my own.

Why did you choose to stay at Southern?

I chose to stay at Southern because I knew the undergraduate degree I earned fully prepared me to become an elementary teacher, and I was confident that an advanced degree would make me an even better, more reflective teacher to best support my diverse students. The relationships I built with my professors at the undergraduate level were incredible, and I was confident that by pursuing my master's degree, those very same professors could take me to the next level in my educational career. Then, in the whirlwind of life in 2011, I applied and was accepted into the doctoral program in the College of Education at Southern. I was confident that this education would make me the best mentor and teacher for undergraduate students of my own. It was time for me to give back to my teacher candidates the very same way my own professors gave of themselves, and a doctoral degree was the next logical step in this pursuit.

Which degrees have you earned?

I am a Triple Eagle proudly earning both B.S.Ed. (1997) and M.Ed. (1998) degrees in elementary education, and an Ed.D. (2016) in Curriculum Studies with a concentration in Teaching and Learning.

Where are you now, and how has your education at southern helped you get there?

I recently accepted a position as an Assistant Professor of Elementary Literacy in the Department of Elementary and Special Education here at Georgia Southern. The education I have received, in conjunction

with my years spent in elementary school and as a Clinical Instructor at Southern, have brought me to the roots of where I first started my career. Without these degrees earned, there's no telling where I would be, but, for now, I'm home.

What does it mean to you to be a Double Eagle?

When people ask where I obtained my education, I am honored to say Southern (and no place else!) – being a Triple Eagle is one of my proudest educational accomplishments.

What's next for you?

Life's what you make it – who knows?! For now, I plan to continue working at Southern as an Assistant Professor and initiate new literacy research and service projects that will positively impact not only my teacher candidates and their work with children in elementary classrooms, but also our local schools and community.

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The Grad Post Fall 2019, Student Spotlight, Mariana Ranzahuer

November 12, 2019



Master of Arts, Professional Communication and Leadership

What drew you to Georgia Southern for your graduate studies?

I was an undergraduate student here, also a student-athlete (women's tennis), so I already had an idea of what it was like to be a student at Georgia Southern. I was drawn to stay because of the connections I had to faculty in the program and my graduate assistantship opportunity. If you are able to socialize with your department faculty and staff, they can be of great help inside and outside the classroom! It was easy for me to adapt because I already knew where everything was on campus and where I wanted to live.

What are your Georgia Southern "points of pride?" What is one thing you are most proud of during your time here at Georgia Southern?

I definitely love the Statesboro campus. It looks beautiful during any season and has so much nature around it. I am also proud of the diversity Georgia Southern offers. I am an

international student from Mexico and I have made friends from all parts of the world due to my relationship with athletics and all the events the Office of International Programs and Services organizes throughout the year.

Are you a part of any research or work projects? If so, what are you doing?

I am currently a graduate assistant for Information Technology Services and we have projects ongoing all year round! We work on maintaining the newest technologies on campus, promoting our University App, and create cybersecurity campaigns that are shared with students, faculty, and staff on all three campuses.

Are you a part of an internship or co-op experience? What are you doing? What are you learning?

I did an internship this past summer in Atlanta with the Millennial Women team, which is a company that provides inspiration and resources for the women of our generation to foster their dreams. I was able to receive credit for a class and it was a great experience to grow in the communications field and make connections for my future.

How is Georgia Southern preparing you for your future career?

I have taken advantage of the resources Georgia Southern offers to students. The Office of Career and Professional Development helps you prepare for upcoming interviews and also offers options to connect with professionals with internship opportunities that can turn into full-time jobs. I have also gained a lot of experience from my graduate assistantship position. I have been able to balance student life with work life and I have learned how to use different programs and develop strategic communication plans.

I feel that graduate school is a glimpse of what it feels like to be in the real world. Your professors are now treating you as an adult and not just a student, which guides you to be more professional and responsible in terms of deadlines and work. I feel I made a great decision to come back to school at Georgia Southern, it has allowed me to explore the field I am looking to begin my career in and know where to look to find the right opportunities and connections for my future.

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